VOLUME XXXVIII, NO. 48
NOVEMBER 27, 1985

LIMITATION IS LIBERATION

LATELY we have been reading in *Poverty, Development and Poverty*, by Bharat Dogra, an Indian writer in New Delhi who has been producing studies of conditions in India, of which this book is the seventh. It is not the sort of volume one will ever find in the shops in the United States. It is published by the author with funds provided by friends who recognize the importance of his work. Those who want to buy it may send $10 to the author, c/o Dr. K. D. Chopra, Moti Nagar, New Delhi 110015, India. The contents are almost entirely horrifying, since in addition to the statistics of hunger and disease in India, the writer provides anecdote after anecdote taken from penniless men and women who live without hope. This is not the sort of book a conventional Indian publisher will issue, nor a book that will interest American or English publishers. It is a report of stark tragedy, and of the failure of aid at various levels to bring relief to India's suffering multitudes.

India now has over 700 million people, 75 per cent of whom live in rural settlements, the rest in 3,000 urban areas. The great majority are undernourished and vulnerable to a wide range of diseases. Some 63 per cent of India's children below three years of age suffer from iron-deficiency anemia. While the supply of grain foods increased dramatically as a result of the Green Revolution (sponsored by the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations) the small farmers were hardly helped by this invasion of Western technology, despite the increased productivity that has been widely heralded. While more grain is available, the really poor do not get to eat it. They can't afford it.

Bharat Dogra writes:

> In 1956 about 356 grams of cereals were available for an Indian in a day. In 1961 this figure went up to 400 grams. This figure declined slightly during the next five years—the average for 1962-66 was 392 grams of cereals. During 1967-71 and again during 1972-76, the average was around 395 grams per day. During 1977-81 the per capita net availability of cereals was 411 grams per day. Thus while during the earlier years the increase in the per capita net availability of cereals was uncertain, the situation is more confident during the last five years. . . .
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> However, the per capita net availability of food grains is not the same thing as the per capita consumption of food grains. It is quite possible that the availability of food grains increases but this does not reduce hunger. If instead of looking at the food situation from the production and imports (availability) side, we examine it from the consumption side then the picture appears worse than what is indicated by data relating to the availability of food grains.
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> The National Sample Survey (NSS) consumer expenditure data provide the most detailed data on food intake in the country, which as a whole declined from 2445 [calories] in 1961-62 to 2170 in 1971-72. Later there was some improvement, with the average per capita calorie intake for the country rising from 2170 in 1971-72 to 2263 per day in 1973-74, but it was still 7.5 per cent below the level in 1961-62. The average calorie intake among the rural population in 1971-72 was 14 per cent below the level in 1961-62. This situation is not peculiar to India.
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> A series of major studies made for the International Labour Organization (ILO) reveal that in seven South Asian countries comprising 70 per cent of the rural population of the non-socialist underdeveloped world, the rural poor have become worse off than they were ten or twenty years ago. The summary study notes that ironically "the increase in poverty has been associated not with a fall but with a rise in cereal production per head, the main component of the diet of the poor."

A passage later in the book throws a light on this anomaly:

> On the developments taking place in the early years of the green revolution, *The Christian Science Monitor* noted at that time that American business insisted on importing all the necessary machines and

> equipment for fertilizer plants under construction, even though India could have provided some of them. They also insisted on importing liquid ammonia instead of using Indian-produced naptha as the fertilizer feed stock. Finally, they were able to fix the prices, the distribution circuits and the profit margin.
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> Here it should be pointed out that the structure of the fertilizers- and chemical pesticides-importing agribusiness is such that the prices are fixed very high, much above the cost of production. The aim is not to maximize production but to maximize profits. Once developing countries become dependent on large-scale imports of these inputs, they have to pay these artificially high prices. Thus the initial expenditure incurred by the developed countries by giving funds, technical aid, experts, etc. is recovered many times later in the form of expansion of markets.

Persecution of the harijans—"children of God," as they were named by Gandhi, to replace the expression "untouchables"—continues in many parts of India. Dogra writes:

> The discrimination in making available water facilities, in fact, is the worst aspect of discriminatory practices as far as the suffering caused to the harijans in the day-to-day life is concerned. In a study by I.P. Desai regarding the availability of water to harijans in Gujarat, it was found that only in five of the 69 villages studied were the harijans allowed access to water sources on the basis of complete equality with savarnas (high castes). . . . In 44 villages it was strongly believed by the savarnas that water is polluted by the mere touch of the harijans and therefore separate wells mostly in their own locality were provided for them. When taking water from lakes or ponds or rivers the harijans were allowed to go only from some fixed points. In seven remaining villages the plight of the harijans was the worst—here the water was considered to be polluted by their contact, and in addition alternative sources of water were not available to them. They were therefore not able to satisfy the primary need for water, not because there is scarcity of water, but because they are untouchables. Available evidence from other parts of the country indicates that the discriminatory practices in the utilization of water exist on a large scale almost all over the country.

Mr. Dogra's book is a systematic survey of the conditions of common folk in India, beginning with the heritage of widespread poverty inherited from British rule in 1947. He looks at the application of the methods of Western industrialism in both agriculture and industry, finding that the result has been "the plunder of natural resources or for conferring the maximum benefits generally and mainly on the already rich and frequently the oppressors, with callous disregard for the immediate and long-term destructive side-effects, also at the same time dragging the country deeper into the imperialist trap." All the major remedial programs are examined in some detail, bringing the conclusion that the conditions of the poor have been worsened rather than improved. Land reform, Dogra shows, has been little more than a pretense. Village craftsmen have been deprived of their traditional ways of making a living. The Green Revolution has made the big farmers richer, the poor poorer. Foreign aid has been a virtual subsidy, not to India, but to the industrial suppliers in America and elsewhere.

Who writes these reports of the failure of the government to alleviate India's woes? The writers, we gather, are a small band of journalists of integrity and a few Gandhians. The author concludes that "poverty exists in intolerable forms in our country, and the existing government or the major opposition parties offer no real solutions to this basic problem."

All that Gandhi predicted would happen if India copied the West has come true. There is no way around this shattering conclusion. What, then, should be done? The question of course is one that Indians must answer for themselves, yet a small contingent of Gandhian workers and thinkers realized more than twenty years ago that one European who had read Gandhi and visited both Burma and India was using simple language to describe what both these countries need to do. We speak of E.F. Schumacher, whose first papers on the subject were published in a pamphlet, *Roots of Economic Growth*, in 1961, by the Gandhian Institute of Studies, Rajghat, Varanasi, India. Schumacher's work became an authentic echo of Gandhian thinking, in words which took

into account the assumptions and intellectual categories of economic science, while he became a spokesman for Gandhi.

What, Schumacher asked, is wrong with Western economics? Thinking about how to make a living cannot be a mistake, but Western economics, he held, is founded on a mistake—the failure to establish limits. As he said:

> Because Economics, *up to a point*, can rightly claim universal validity, it has been accepted as possessing universal validity throughout. What do I mean by *up to a point?* The essence of materialism is not its concern with material wants, but the total absence of any idea of Limit or Measure. The materialist's idea of progress is an idea of *progress without limit*. . . .
>
> Is this compatible with Buddhism or Christianity or with anything the Great Teachers of mankind have proclaimed? Of course not. It is compatible only with the most naked form of Materialism.
>
> Economics, as taught today throughout the world—before the iron curtain and behind—recognizes no limit of any kind. It is, therefore, the Economics of Materialism and nothing else. There is implicit in it a purely materialist view of life, and it is inseparable from this view of life.

When will the teachers of economics, he asked, admit that other systems of Economics are possible? For reply to this question Schumacher launched his thinking about Gandhi's ideas:

> I can here mention only one such teaching, propounded by the greatest man of our age, Mahatma Gandhi. Are the professors and students of Economics even aware of Gandhi as an economist? And yet he had much to say on economic matters; he has laid the foundation for a system of Economics that would be compatible with Hinduism and, I believe, with Buddhism too. His economics were derived from the concepts *Swadeshi* and *Khaddar*. This is what he said about Swadeshi:
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> "In your village you are bound to support your village barber to the exclusion of the finished barber who may come to you from Madras. If you find it necessary that your village barber should reach the attainments of the barber from Madras you may train him to that. Send him to Madras by all means, if you wish, in order that he may learn his calling. Until you do that you are not justified in going to another barber. That is Swadeshi. So when we find that there are many things we cannot get in India we must do without them. We may have to do without many things. . . .
>
> "It has been urged that India cannot adopt Swadeshi in the economic life. Those who advance this objection do not look upon Swadeshi as a rule of life. With them it is a mere patriotic effort, not to be made if it involved any self-denial. But Swadeshi, as defined here, is a religious principle to be undergone in utter disregard of physical discomfort caused to individuals. Much of the deep poverty of India is due to the departure from Swadeshi in the economic life. If not a single article of commerce had been brought from outside India she would be today a land flowing with milk and honey."

This is the fundamental ground of Gandhi's nonviolent revolution. What you do in life you should do from fundamental conviction that it is the right thing to do, and this applies to economic as well as to all other human relations.

What then is Khaddar?

> The vow of Khaddar is to spin with one's own hands and to wear nothing but homespun garments. These are Gandhi's words:
>
> "You may ask, 'Why should we use our hands?' You may say: 'Manual work has got to be done by those who are illiterate. I can only occupy myself with reading literature and political essays.' We have to realize the dignity of labour."

Schumacher quotes from a Western visitor to Gandhi's Ashram where his principles were put into practice:

> "When we thought of the whole atmosphere of the place and the ideals for which it stands—the joy of the workers in their work, the happy, contented homes, the education available to the children, the absence of any anxious thought for the morrow—our hearts ached to think that we were to leave it all so soon. Here, more than ever before in our busy lives, have we felt the truth of the words 'Laborare est orare'—to labour is to pray."
>
> It is not my purpose here to argue that Swadeshi and Khaddar are necessarily the right and only possible growing points for a system of ideas that would deserve the description of Buddhist Economics. But do you see that this *is* Economics and that it is in

> many ways diametrically opposed to the Economics of Materialism? Do you see the difference between "To labour is to pray" and "Labour is an item of cost—a disutility"? At this stage, when the non-materialists are still so very weak and so very trusting, it is merely my concern to plead with the professors and students of economics—and with the statesmen as well—that they should study and listen to the Mahatma's Economics with as much attention as they now give exclusively to the Economics of Materialism.

From an ancient Eastern point of view, Gandhi was simply preaching common sense, although for a Westerner it was plainly *revolution.* Schumacher, a highly educated Western economist—in Germany, Oxford and Columbia University, where he lectured as a young man—was able to see Gandhi's thinking as common sense for even the West, although he knew it would not go down easily. He explained and explained, using illustrations.

> Economics means a certain ordering of life according to the philosophy inherent and implicit in economics. The science of economics does not stand on its own feet; it is derived from a view of the meaning and purpose of life—whether the economist himself knows this or not. And, as I have said, the only fully developed system of economic thought that exists at present is derived from a purely materialist view of life.
>
> Let me give one or two examples. If you ask an economic expert to advise you on the structure of freight rates—the charges to be levied by the Railways, Inland Water Transport, and so forth—he may be inclined to advise that the rates per ton/mile should "taper off," so that they are the lower, the longer the haul. He may suggest that this is simply the "right" system, because it encourages long-distance transport, promotes large-scale specialized production, and thus leads to "an optimum use of resources." He may point to the experience of the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, etc.—all "advanced" countries employing just the "tapering device." Do you see that in doing so he would be recommending *one particular way of life*—the way of Materialism? An "economic expert" steeped in Gandhian Economics would undoubtedly give very different advice, he might say: "Local, short-distance transportation should receive every encouragement; but long hauls should be discouraged because they would promote urbanization, specialization beyond the point of human integrity, the growth of a rootless proletariat, in short, a most undesirable and uneconomic way of life." Do you see that "Economics does not stand on its own feet"?

This article, which was written in Burma in 1955, anticipated virtually all the principles of the thinking, individual and social, indicated by ecological philosophy. Schumacher wrote:

> If you want to become materialists, follow the way shown by Western Economics; if you want to remain Buddhists, find your own "Middle Way."
>
> To find this way, I suggest, it will be necessary to start by defining certain "limits." Material things are of real importance—for a person, a family, or a nation—only "up to a point." So we can distinguish three economic conditions: misery, sufficiency, and surfeit. Of these, two are bad for a person, a family, or a nation—and only one, sufficiency is good. Economic "progress" is good only to the point of sufficiency; beyond that, it is evil, destructive, uneconomic. . . .
>
> Next in importance comes the distinction between "renewable" and "non-renewable" resources. A civilization built on renewable resources, such as the products of forestry and agriculture, is by this fact alone superior to one built on non-renewable resources, such as oil, coal, metal, etc. That is because the former can last, while the latter cannot last. The former cooperates with Nature, while the latter robs Nature. The former bears the sign of life, while the latter bears the sign of death. . . . The frantic development of atomic energy shows that they know their fate and are now trying, through the application of ever-increasing violence against nature, to escape it. Atomic energy for "peaceful purpose" on a scale calculated to replace coal and oil, is a prospect even more appalling than the Atomic or Hydrogen bomb. For here unregenerate man is entering a territory which, to all those who have eyes to see, bears the warning sign "Keep out." . . .
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> Impermanent are all created things, but some are less impermanent than others. Any system of thought that *recognizes no limits* can manifest itself only in extremely impermanent creations. This is the great charge to be laid against Materialism and its offspring, modern economics, that they recognize no limits and, in addition, would be incapable of observing them if they did. This is the terror of the situation.

> Self-imposed limits, voluntary restraint, conscious limitation—those are the life-giving and life-preserving forces. The New Economics, of which we stand in need, would be based on the recognition—that economic progress is healthy only "up to a point"; that the complication of life is permissible only "up to a point", that the pursuit of efficiency or productivity is good only "up to a point"; that the use of non-renewable resources is wise only "up to a point"; that specialization is compatible with human integrity only "up to a point"; that the substitution of "scientific method" for common sense is bearable only "up to a point,' and so on and so forth, never forgetting that all these "points" lie far lower on the scale than most people dare to think.
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> Yes, indeed, the New Economics would be a veritable "Statute of Limitation"—and that means a "Statute of Liberation."

This was written by a man who, a few years earlier, had been a brilliant materialist, schooled in doctrines which he now rejected for good and sufficient reason. Schumacher had always been public-spirited, but now his integrity had brought him to adopt without significant compromise a spiritual philosophy of life. For the remaining twenty-two years of his life he used his incomparable powers of explanation and persuasion to call the world to account.

REVIEW
POETRY AND TRUTH

IN the spring of 1980, Carolyn Forché, an American poet and journalist, met with six young Salvadoran labor leaders to learn what she could about conditions in El Salvador. They told her many things, among them of a young *campesino,* active in union organizing, who was "abducted, tortured for several days, killed, and dismembered, his body scattered in a ditch."

> "We found those soldiers," one of them said quietly "and took them to the ditch and made them assemble our friend again on the ground like a man, and ask forgiveness of the corpse." The soldiers were then released, unharmed, because it was felt that in so doing an important lesson had been learned for both the soldiers and themselves: that such acts of forgiveness, if practiced, would continue to be possible.
>
> Though we were in danger that night of attack by the right-wing death squads, my friends found time to ask me what I did for work in the United States, when I was not in their country documenting human rights abuses. I found myself peculiarly embarrassed to answer that I was a poet. My friends were incredulous and exhorted me never to be ashamed of that kind of work, that poetry was important to those imprisoned, fighting, or afraid, to pass the time uplifted when it is terrible to wait.
>
> Some of these men did not yet read or write, but each had committed to memory some lines of verse, particularly those written by José Marti, and they proceeded to recite them for me. Poetry was certainly enough they said. The world for which they might be compelled to fight would certainly not be without poets. "Most of ours are dead or in exile now," they said, "but there are young ones still alive here." Would I like to meet them?

She met them—students or graduates at the national university. They could not publish their work, they said. But after the struggle, they said, "we'll teach poetry everywhere in the country, like Ernesto Cardenal in Nicaragua." But all of the young poets she met were killed in 1981.

Simply compiling a list of the dead in El Salvador now requires "the utmost courage."

> Consider the conditions under which such information must be gathered. The wire services, and all the telecommunications, are monitored by the military. Pseudonyms provide no security. The death squads operate with impunity in every hotel. No one can afford to sleep in the same house, or travel in the same vehicle by the same route: it is dangerous to become traceable. Effectiveness becomes self-limiting. Between January 1980 and May 1981 thirteen members of the press were deported or barred from entering the country, twenty were captured and/or tortured, three disappeared, nine were wounded, and twelve died. Radio stations, print shops, newspapers, media offices, and press vehicles have all been dynamited. Twice last year, death lists were compiled of journalists thought to be unfriendly to the regime, both foreign and Salvadoran. . . . I was once told by a U.S. embassy official that events in Central America must be viewed in a context. Regarding the meaning of human rights for the writer in El Salvador, *that* is the context.

Where did this material appear? During 1981 seventy writers, some of them well known, others unheard of in the United States, gathered in Toronto, Canada, for a congress on "The Writer and Human Rights" called by the Toronto Arts Group for Human Rights. Selected contributions were published in 1983 with this title by Lester & Orpen Dennys Ltd., 78 Sullivan Street, Toronto, Ontario M5T 1C1, Canada, proceeds from the sale of which being given by the writers and editors to Amnesty International, which helped with the research. Every word of the book is gripping, much of it horrifying, all of it inspiring. The editors say:

> Writers from countries as various as Chile and West Germany, Czechoslovakia and South Africa, India and England (over thirty nationalities in all) came to the University of Toronto where the congress took place. Many of them had been victims of exile, censorship, and imprisonment. Others who had lived secure from these forms of repression offered their voices to the demand for human rights. . . . From a list sent to us by Amnesty International, we . . . selected the names of seven writers whose situations were representative of different kinds of intimidation: censorship, exile, torture, imprisonment, disappearance. This book is dedicated to these writers, themselves symbols of countless others who have been similarly silenced. We have added the

name of Alaida Foppa of Guatemala, who disappeared in December 1980.

Among the contributors are Margaret Atwood, Canadian poet, Eduardo Galeano, Uruguayan novelist, Allen Ginsberg, American poet, Nadine Gordimer, South African novelist, Jacobo Timerman, Argentine journalist, Susan Sontag, American critic, and George Woodcock, Canadian writer.

John Fraser's report on "Journalism in China" is among the most interesting. A Canadian journalist and national editor of the Toronto *Globe and Mail*, Fraser tells what he learned as a reporter in China, noting that those who were successful journalists during the Cultural Revolution were the victims of the regime that followed Mao's death. A "protest," he says, began in Peking in 1978 and was allowed to go on for four months, after which "the full weight of state oppression came down on them." The Chinese Communist Party, Fraser says, fully understands "the power of a small group of committed idealists," since that is what they themselves were once. Fraser continues:

> The interesting thing about writers during the Xidan Democracy Wall period [when writers put their texts on walls as "posters"]—and that includes writers in all the major cities in China—was that their age ranged from twenty-four or twenty-five to thirty-five. That meant they'd all been activists during the Cultural Revolution, in a number of cases, they'd been rather ferocious Red Guards. Wei Jingsheng, probably the most notable of the activists, told me once that what he had done to some of his teachers was something he could never forgive himself or forget for the rest of his life. He understood fully the politics of the day and how he and many other young people had been manipulated and betrayed, and his campaign was to try to make other Chinese people understand this. He saw himself as a journalist, because he saw journalism as the most effective means to communicate the problems in Chinese society. He engaged the government—or tried to engage the government—in a debate. He started off by looking at the ferocious campaign going on then in China to criticize the Gang of Four and Lin Biao (who was the former Defense Minister and rose to great heights, supposedly to be Mao's chosen successor until he fell from grace after a factional fight: he was supposed to have died in an airplane accident). Wei Jingsheng asked, how can you isolate the criticism, how can you look simply at Lin Biao, who held sway from 1966 to 1971, and the Gang of Four, who held sway from 1971 to 1976, without examining the system that allowed them to gain such power and to hold on to it for so long? But that's what you're not allowed to do: if you're making criticism you must confine it to specific things. He couldn't understand how these monsters (as many Chinese people would call them), who gained control for nearly half the period the Chinese communists have been in power, could be considered an aberration. Weren't they simply a natural product? By the time his arguments were starting to build a following the government came down heavily on him and his supporters. He was made an example of.

Fraser concludes by telling what happens to foreign journalists who try to find out about swings of opinion in China:

> All you had to do, at least in Peking, was to go down to the Democracy Wall, in the beginning of the movement, and at the very least you'd find some English-language students wanting to practice their English who would translate the wall posters, and it was also a chance to meet many of the activists. But most Western journalists, for a variety of reasons, found this a very threatening experience. I don't really understand all the reasons for this. I know some of them: part of it is that Western journalists are united with academics and theologians in having a horror of being found inconsistent. A lot of the things that we were finding out about Chinese people were diametrically opposed to what we'd been led to believe. . . .
>
> I went over there succeeding a journalist who had been thrown out—Ross Munro, the seventh correspondent for the *Globe and Mail*—and I went over cocky as hell. I was going to prove to them that nothing was going to frighten me, and nothing did—until my wife and I started getting Chinese friends. I realized too slowly that the government was aware of most of the people I was in contact with, and that anything I wrote that obviously came from Chinese sources might be traced. So one has on one's conscience the possibility that one can do people a lot of harm. You have to take a whole bunch of things that you get trained to do in the West—aggressively going after a story, and bravely putting forth all the facts—and try to consider what in fact your bravery

> and your aggressiveness are going to do to a number of real people. That confronts you head on, with self-censorship in a very real way. I don't know the answer to that one. In any authoritarian or totalitarian country, this problem is faced by any Western journalist with a conscience.

Allen Ginsberg, telling about the United States, describes the method used by government agents to weaken and suppress the underground press from 1968 to 1972. They would plant pot in a drawer on the paper's premises, then find it and seize the files, destroy the machinery, and take everybody to jail, although usually the government would lose the case "because it was generally a setup." The news services were similarly treated. A UP writer, Tom Fourcade, told him that "there were about four hundred underground newspapers, and that 60 per cent of them had been sabotaged or harassed or busted illegally or framed, or the vendors or publishers intimidated or printers intimidated or distributors intimidated."

> Or *landlords* intimidated. That was another way of dealing with the underground press: The FBI would visit the landlord and say, "You got a subversive newspaper here, and you'd better make them move, or raise their rent." That happened in a number of cases—San Diego, Ann Arbor, New York, and Austin, Texas.

A Swedish novelist, Per Wästberg, sounded a keynote for all the contributors to *The Writer and Human Rights:*

> No common good can be founded on a common lie, and the lie propagated by many states and bureaucracies is that there is no truth in imagination. The debasement of words and concepts in official use is a special feature of our times, and the task of serious writers is to expose hypocrisy and raise the standards of world honesty. . . . Thus, the author may be the only one who claims that the emperor is naked. A political regime can then do one of two things: put the clear-eyed writer in a dark jail cell, or go home and change into proper clothes. In either case, it remains the author's job to see to it that nobody is ignorant of the world's condition and can therefore claim to be innocent.

This book should be widely circulated and read.

COMMENTARY
FRUIT TREES FOR AFRICA

WE take from the November-December issue of *Seedling News*, publication of TreePeople, the tree-planting group here in southern California (10601 Mulholland Drive, Beverly Hills, Calif. 90210), the following account of a project that has universal appeal:

> Watching the world respond to the African food emergency was encouraging, but a distressing feature was the lack of attention paid to long term solutions. TreePeople knew of the critical link between famine and loss of tree cover, but it wasn't till we learned that California fruit trees had been grown successfully in drought-stricken Africa that we knew we had something special to offer.
>
> Most reforestation efforts in Africa have failed because they've ignored the local people and have been "too much too soon." Surviving trees are often cut for fuel; hungry people can't wait the 5-8 years it takes for trees to produce food.
>
> Each spring, for the past two years, TreePeople has been saving nursery surplus fruit trees and distributing them to low income families. The trees, already four feet tall, can produce fruit within a year!
>
> We've devised a low budget, high impact plan to carry out our program to where it's desperately needed. We propose using an Air Force training mission to fly a portion of these surplus trees to several poverty-stricken African communities. We're talking with both indigenous organizations and American relief groups to coordinate the airlift, plus the distribution, planting, education, maintenance, and protection efforts. Good candidate organizations have programs in Sudan, Mali, Senegal and Lesotho.
>
> TreePeople has worked with the Air Force on local tree transport for twelve years. Officials greeted our proposal with support and enthusiasm. However, before the airlift happens it must receive high level Washington approval. As can be expected, we've run into truckloads of red tape. Thanks to Congressional support led by Senator Cranston, the dream progresses toward reality, with next March as a projected shipping date.

This is more a great idea than a costly project. TreePeople thinks $50,000 will take care of it. Help is needed to gain this amount.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

PEACE WON OUT

THE paper founded by the late John Holt, *Growing Without Schooling*, comes out every other month. Six issues (a year's subscription) cost $15.00. There are usually 32 pages filled with material on teaching your children at home, mostly by parents who do the teaching, along with book reviews and helpful stuff on playing instruments (John was a cellist). We quote from it here, more or less regularly.

Issue No. 45, which came out in the summer of this year, has news about court proceedings and legislative action in seventeen states, mostly favorable to home schoolers. Common sense seems to be prevailing around the country. But best of all, as usual, is what parents write in. The following is from a mother in Maine:

> . . . I agreed with what John wrote in *GWS* No. 42 about kids learning that they were dumb in school. But he misses an important point. There are some kids that learn that they are "smart" in school. They learn that "smart" is having a lot of information about certain things, and using that information to do well on tests. They are as damaged and deluded as the children who learn that they are "dumb." For that kind of "smart" has nothing to do with living intelligently and morally and gracefully.
>
> I learned that I was "smart" in school. And until my mid-twenties I was baffled as to why I couldn't seem to cope with life. I had won two spelling bees, hadn't I? Learning that I was "smart" now seems to me a cruel joke.
>
> Now I think that being *really* smart is the ability to live well—that is, in harmony with one's own needs and the needs of the rest of the world. *Really* smart is the ability to solve problems. I would never tell the school board this but my goal for my own and my children's education here at home is to get better and better at solving problems, and at meeting needs. *That* is our curriculum here; *those* are the "basics." Math and reading and such are the frills. (And we do enjoy them.)

A parent in Nova Scotia—in an area where there are no laws about going to school—reports that one of her children went for two years, but quit after reading Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings.* Another member of the family developed an unusual interest:

> . . . Last year, my 12-year-old and I spent some months studying early Mesopotamian civilization. I got some maps and Time-Life books out of the library and she found some quasi-historical literature. We pored over trade routes, copied maps, made a time-line, talked about Sumerians and Egyptians and the Indus Valley and the habits of the Phoenicians. She found a number of *National Geographic* articles and eventually wrote some very interesting reports on her own full of terrible spelling mistakes but otherwise quite accurate.
>
> In the course of all this, she became fascinated by the funny little marks on clay tablets, known as cuneiform. She studied photographs whenever she found them and eventually began to translate a few words and decipher the numbers, which are frequently an important part, since cuneiform was often used by merchants keeping track of their grains and wines. Recently, on a trip to visit her grandparents, she got to go into a rare book library and actually handle a number of ancient seals and tablets. She also went to an exhibit of the history of writing and realized that cuneiform is the oldest known form of writing used commonly by a people; it probably precedes the invention of paper. I didn't know that. In fact, I didn't know most of this before we started. I mostly learned it as we went along, and I still don't know as much as she does. . . .
>
> People often ask me whether teaching at home doesn't take up an awful lot of time. I never know what to say. It's like asking whether cooking takes up a lot of time, or reading, or gardening. It all depends on what you want to do with your time.

Our next selection is reprinted from a paper called *Western Pennsylvania Homeschoolers.* The writer, Susan Richman, says:

> Jesse (7) and Jacob (4) have never been involved at all with super-heroes or He-men. We have no TV, don't go to toy stores much, and are usually simply blithely unaware of all these commercially pushed fantasies. The boys somehow agree with me that all those muscled toy dolls are hideous and creepy. For me, perhaps, the commercial adult pre-made fantasy

> aspects are what distress me the most about this sort of play—it is adult made especially for children, with no referents in the real continuum of human experience. I wonder if this sort of play can go anywhere, evolve into something personally meaningful, help the child to make sense of the real world.

Yet the two boys have evolved an elaborate war-play game, which the writer describes in detail, explaining, "As a new mother strange to the ways of little boys' play, I often worried about how I'd handle the *gun* question." Well, the boys read children's books about war and revolution, devised forts and battleships, made cannon balls by rolling up tin foil, and kept killing off whole armies of toy soldiers. This went on for years. What could mother do? She writes:

> On occasion I've thought of discouraging all this play considering the *gun* question, feeling disheartened that my boys saw wars as such a game, such an exciting play theme, such an abstraction of paper soldier deaths. I'm glad now I've let it be and let it evolve and grow. It is their play, it belongs to them, and further it is clearly becoming their way of grappling with all the real questions of how people have and might get along in the world.

A variation of the war game was on the way. Mother reports:

> And then, just yesterday, I sat in the attic nursing Molly to sleep while Jesse and Jacob continued their new version of the soldier game. Both rebuilt elaborate block forts, sturdily reinforced, the paper ship fleets were lovingly repaired with tape, all was set. *But the battle didn't come.* Jesse looked up at me after a silence (I was reading a magazine), and said, very quietly, almost reverently, "Look, look at this small building I've made. . . . It is the House of Peace. . . . It has one soldier in it, with *no* weapons allowed, and it is where each side can come, in safety, to talk." His voice was almost choked, full of emotion. He took a wooden sculptured head (a leftover from an old tenant who was an artist of sorts), and placed it by the little building. "This is the grim face of Peace, looking grimly at all the war." Another, larger, grinning sculpture was placed by the huge fort. "This is the smiling face of War, it looks down gleefully on all the fighting and destruction."

The generals of the two sides met in the little Peace House, they talked and talked, and then—

> TRIUMPH! PEACE won out! Plans were swiftly made to join the two opposing forts in one large cooperative complex. . . . And when the rebuilding was complete, Jesse with solemn ceremony took the crown from the War God's head and placed it on the Head of Peace. . . .
>
> If I had banned their soldier game out of some urge of my own to have my boys be peaceful and peace-loving, they could never have grown to this point. . . . I feel hopeful when Jesse says, as he did today, that maybe a problem with these grown-up real generals is that they *still* think they are playing with toy soldiers, and not real people.

The address of *Growing Without Schooling* is 729 Boyleston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116. Publication of *GWS*, we have learned, will continue, with Donna Richoux as editor.

FRONTIERS

The Connecticut River

A BOOK that we acquired almost by accident—a MANAS contributor asked for it because in his distant youth he had planned a canoe trip on the Connecticut River—is *The Upper Valley: Connecticut River*, by Jerold Wikoff (Chelsea Green Publishing Co., P.O. Box 283, Chelsea, Vermont, 1985, $29.95). There is not much in it about the river, bringing disappointment to our contributor, but a great deal is said about the early days of New England, about the Indians who lived in the region, and about the farmers who first raised wheat and milk cows, then sheep, and the industrialization which followed.

It is the story of some forgotten men, such as Eleazar Wheelock, who founded Dartmouth College in 1769, to educate the Indians, he said, even though hardly any Indians remained near Hanover, New Hampshire, where the college was erected with money raised by an Indian, Sampson Occom, in England. Wheelock justified his claim by saying that he would train white missionaries to the Indians.

Better known, perhaps, is Nathan Smith, who in 1797 added the medical school to Dartmouth and taught the students almost singlehanded, with local doctors helping when Smith was called out on a case. Wheelock, it is said, was so impressed by Smith's work that he opened evening prayers in the chapel with the words: "Oh Lord, we thank Thee for the oxygen gas, we thank Thee for the hydrogen gas, and all the gases. We thank Thee for the cerebrum, and for the medulla oblongata." By 1812 there were seventy-seven students in the Dartmouth medical school.

Among the now famous people who settled in the Upper Valley were Augustus Saint Gaudens, whose statue of Abraham Lincoln, completed in 1887, graces Lincoln Park in Chicago. Saint-Gaudens settled in Cornish, New Hampshire, in 1885, and worked there as a sculptor until he died. Maxfield Parrish also lived in Cornish, or rather in the township of Plainfield, nearby, where he stayed for sixty-eight years.

The Connecticut River was discovered by the Dutch explorer, Adriaen Block, in 1614, who came in search of furs. This was the beginning of the ruin of the Indians, who got used to the manufactured cloth which they paid for with beaver pelts. But beaver have a low fertility rate and the pelts were soon gone. Before long their land was gone, too, transferred to British settlers. The Indians fought the settlers but could not win.

Nor could they become "white." The author describes the failure of Moor's School, founded by Wheelock before Dartmouth, as a school for Indians:

> Wheelock's lack of success at Moor's School was not surprising. In the eighteenth century the education of Indians generally meant their conversion to Christianity. The education Indians received was in large measure meant to aid them in their conversion—a point which explains why schools for Indians were established in America long before they were for women and blacks. The conversion to Christianity was also usually accompanied by "civilizing," which meant training Indians in the ways and manners of European life. . . . Great stress was placed on the "classics," and Indians at the Moor School were taught not only English, but Latin and Greek as well. Wheelock wrote of two Indian pupils that they "will now read Tully, Virgil, and the Greek Testament very handsomely." Such knowledge was valueless in teaching Indians how to live productive lives within the Anglo-Saxon communities or how to educate other Indians to do so.

Since the Connecticut River runs from Canada, dividing New Hampshire and Vermont, through Massachusetts, down through Connecticut to the Atlantic Ocean, it was the only cleared path into the forested Upper Valley wilderness. In winter the settlers used it as a road for wagons and sleds. When the ice melted, they used flatboats to transport goods. Giant white pines were floated down the river and sold as masts to the British navy. Wikoff's book, which is filled with photographs, shows the vast logging

operations that were carried on for a century or more.

The first cycle of agriculture in the Upper Valley was the fairly brief age of "self-sufficient farming," when settlers produced everything they needed for themselves.

> All of these early farms were generally self-sufficient. Almost everything used or consumed—including clothing, food, and household items like soap—was made or raised by the settlers. To succeed in this endeavor, the work performed by both the men and the women was essential. The division of labor on Vermont and New Hampshire hill farms followed the traditional patterns of European settlers in America. Clearing the land and raising crops and livestock generally defined the man's work sphere. All chores and tasks connected with the household represented the woman's province. . . .
>
> Climbing steep hills, even though slow with horse and wagon, did not bother the early settler, whose trips to town were infrequent. Only later, when farming became dependent on the transportation of goods to distant markets, did the inaccessibility of the hillside farms become a problem.
>
> Early farm families also gave little thought to the contour of the land. Farmers produced small amounts, and crops were harvested with sickle and scythe. It made little difference whether the land was rocky or flat or on an incline. Only when farming became fully market oriented, requiring that a few cash crops be grown in large quantities, did the farmers find hillside locations unsuitable.

Small saw mills and grist mills soon came along, wherever water flowed to supply power. They were everywhere throughout the period of self-sufficient farming. But when farming became a marketing enterprise, they were gradually abandoned.

The story of the "Underground Railroad" to rescue runaway slaves and help them on toward Canada has often been told, and Wikoff has a page on this subject, saying that its actual history in Vermont is somewhat mysterious. He repeats some interesting tales.

There was a time in the middle of the nineteenth century when Vermont and New Hampshire had more than two million sheep—mostly Merino—brought to the country by a politician stationed in Portugal. But this wave of prosperity lasted for only about thirty-five years. Cotton came back after the Civil War and dogs were killing the sheep.

The rest of the book is about the coming of the railroads, the New England mills, and industrialization in general. We haven't the heart to go on. But incidentally, there are forty ways to spell the name of the Connecticut River and the state.